

Trade G. B. v. 23.

A
P L A N
FOR THE
IMPROVEMENT
OF THE
F I S H E R Y,
IN THE
R I V E R T H A M E S.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED BY H. REYNELL, (No. 21,) PICCADILLY,
NEAR THE HAY-MARKET.

M.DCC.LXXXVII.



At a meeting of the trustees of the
WESTMINSTER FISH-MARKET, at
OLIVER'S coffee-house, WEST-
MINSTER HALL GATE, TUESDAY
the 24th day of APRIL, 1787 :

RESOLVED,

THAT it appears to this meeting,
that the trustees of the WESTMINSTER
fish-market, are in possession of the sum
of £3,200. now invested in the three per
cent. consolidated bank annuities, and
standing in the names of JAMES SAYER,
GEORGE STUBBS, senior, and THOMAS
PARKER, esquires.

RESOLVED,

That it appears to this meeting,
that the trustees of the WESTMINSTER
fish-

fish-market, are in the receipt of the annual average profit of £140. arising from the certificates of the entry of fishing vessels into the river THAMES; and in the receipt of the annual sum of £65. arising from the ground-rent of the late market.

RESOLVED,

That it appears to this meeting, that the annual disbursements of the trustees, amount to nearly the sum of £60.

RESOLVED,

That it appears to this meeting, that the said profits (the above disbursements excepted) arising annually to the trustees, are undisposed of, and unapplied by the acts of parliament, under which the trustees were appointed; and have been annually accumulating in their hands, without contributing in the smallest degree, to the completion of that object, for which they were originally intended.

A plan

A plan having been laid before the meeting, for the purpose of applying the above-stated sum of money, and annual profits, to the improvement of the fishery of the river THAMES ; and the same having been taken into consideration;

RESOLVED,

That the said plan be printed, and distributed to the respective trustees.

RESOLVED,

That the treasurer be required to call a public meeting of the trustees, to be held at the GUILD-HALL, WESTMINSTER, at a convenient time.

A state

A state of the conduct of the trustees of the late WESTMINSTER fish-market, from its institution in 1749, to its dissolution in 1755, and from thence to this time, with heads of a plan for applying the annual income, and monies in their hands, for the better regulation of the fishery, and for preserving the fry of fish in the river THAMES.

The following statement of the proceedings of the trustees of the late WESTMINSTER fish-market, was drawn up by one of the trustees, and is now ordered to be printed by them, as containing much useful information, and as suggesting a practicable proposal for the advantage of the public.

What the motives and views of the trustees are, in taking up this subject at this time, will appear more fully, in the course of the observations we shall have occasion

occasion to make hereafter. At present, it is more material for the information of the reader, to begin by stating who the trustees are, what their powers consist in, and how they were originally instituted; circumstances, which from lapse of time, and since the attention of the public has been diverted to other objects, are perhaps very generally forgotten; and in doing this, no apology need be made for opening the subject in a plain, concise, and unambitious manner, which we all know to be the best, and indeed the only language of real business.

1 7 8 7.

THE PRESENT TRUSTEES.

1. The Most Hon. the Marquis of Stafford.
2. The Right Honourable Lord Onslow.
3. The Honourable John York.
4. James Sayer, Esq. Treasurer.
5. John Pownall, Esq.
6. Richard Pearce, Esq.
7. Charles Cheere, Esq.
8. William Barrett, Esq.
9. Thomas Parker, Esq.
10. Henry

10. Henry Lowndes, Esq.
 11. George Stubbs, Esq.
 12. Thomas Gilbert, Esq. M. P.
 13. Abel Smith, Esq. M. P.
 14. Edward Sayer, Esq.
 15. John Hatfell, Esq.
 16. George Stubbs, jun. Esq.
 17. Robert Quarme, Esq.
 18. James Meyrick, Esq.
 19. Sir Cecil Wray, Bart.
 20. Henry Lamb, Esq.
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BY an act of parliament passed in the 22d year of GEO. II. cap. 49. the preamble of which recites, that a free and open market for fish, in the city of WESTMINSTER, would greatly tend to increase the number of fishermen, and improve and encourage the fishery of the kingdom : it was enacted, that from and after the 24th of JUNE, 1749, there should be a free and open market held in the city of WESTMINSTER, for all sorts of fish.

And

And for the erecting, establishing, and maintaining the market under such rules and regulations as are prescribed by the act—

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|---|------------------------------|
| 1. Lieutenant-General James Oglethorpe. | 12. Rev. Dr. Scawen Kenrick. |
| 2. Lord Viscount Trentham, now Marquis of Stafford. | 13. William Lowndes, Esq. |
| 3. Right Hon. George Doddington | 14. Capt. Philip Durell. |
| 4. Sir Peter Warren, Knight of the Bath. | 15. Thomas Wyndham, Esq. |
| 5. Sir Bouchier Wrey, Bart. | 16. Thomas Smith, Esq. |
| 6. Sir Robert Grosvenor, Bt. | 17. Harman Verelst, Esq. |
| 7. Sir John Crossie, Bart. | 18. George Payne, Esq. |
| 8. Sir Richard Lloyd, Knt. | 19. Henry Cheere, Esq. |
| 9. John Laroche, Esq. | 20. Daniel Gell, Esq. |
| 10. George Harrison, Esq. | 21. Francis Hutchinson, Esq. |
| 11. Thomas Fonnereau, Esq. | 22. William Pearce, Esq. |
| | 23. Thomas Wilson, D. D. |
| | 24. Richard Combes, Esq. |
| | 25. Francis Gwyn, Esq. |
| | 26. Edward Vernon, Esq. |

were appointed trustees, and they, or any five of them, were vested with full powers to carry the act into execution.

And for preparing a proper place for a market, and for maintaining the same in repair, certain duties, payable by fishermen or others, selling fish in the market, were granted to the trustees, with powers to levy the same.

The trustees were likewise empowered to assign over the said duties, as a security for any monies which should be borrowed by them, to be applied in discharge of the expences incurred in passing the act, and in erecting the market; as also to appoint treasurer, collectors, and other officers; to allow them salaries, and to remove them as they should think fit.

And the trustees were yearly to deliver in, to a petty sessions of the justices of the peace in WESTMINSTER, an account in writing, of their receipts and disbursements, during the preceding year, to be kept by the clerk of the said sessions; and if any surplus should remain in the hands of the trustees, the same was to be applied yearly, in binding out poor boys apprentices to fishermen, or others employed in the sea service.

It was also enacted, that if any fishermen should keep back fish at QUEENBOROUGH, GRAVESEND, or any other place,
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in well-boats or other vessels; so as not to sell off their whole cargo within eight days from their arrival, between NORTH YARMOUTH and DOVER, they should forfeit the vessel and cargo.

The commissioners of WESTMINSTER bridge were empowered to grant a piece of ground, at the foot of the bridge, near CANNON-ROW, to the trustees, for the use of such intended market; the property of which, and of all buildings erected thereon, was vested in the trustees.

It was also enacted, that when any of the trustees should die, or refuse to act, seven or more of them, by any writing under their hands and seals, were empowered to appoint others in their room, and they might adjourn their meetings from time to time, as they should think fit.

Soon after the commencement of this act, the commissioners of WESTMINSTER bridge (some delay having taken place)

conveyed to the trustees a piece of ground, near CANNON-ROW, for the intended market; and the trustees, in pursuance of their powers, borrowed of MR. JAMES STEDMAN, £400. for securing of which, with interest, they assigned over the tolls and duties that were likely to arise from the market; and with this money they paid the charges attending the passing of the act, and erected shops and stalls, to encourage fishermen and others to resort there,

The trustees finding, that notwithstanding they had fitted up the market in a commodious manner, and had given every encouragement to fishermen to resort thereto, yet that very little or no business was likely to be done there; they were obliged to apply again to parliament, and by an act passed 29th GEO. II. cap. 39. the preamble of which recites, that many difficulties had arose in putting the act of the 22d GEO. II. into execution, which not only obstructed the establishment of a
free

free market in WESTMINSTER, but had rendered ineffectual the other good purposes intended thereby; it was enacted, that all owners of fishing vessels, coming from sea, for the supply of LONDON and WESTMINSTER with fish, should sell off their cargo within eight days after their arrival, on pain of forfeiture of the vessel and cargo; and the trustees were empowered to appoint an inspector to take an account of the arrival of such vessels, and to examine into the state of their cargoes; and for defraying the expences attending the appointment of such inspector, and otherwise, it was directed, that there should be paid to his majesty's searcher at GRAVESEND, for the certificate of the entry of the arrival of any such fishing vessels, two shillings, whereof the searcher was to have six-pence for the certificate, and the remaining one shilling and six-pence was to be paid by the searcher to the trustees, or to whom they should appoint; and all masters or owners of fishing vessels were ordered, within three days after their arrival, to report the same
to

to the searcher at GRAVESEND, who should give them a certificate thereof; but by an act of 33d GEORGE II. cap. 27. it is directed, that instead of making entries of their arrival, with the searcher at GRAVESEND, such entries should be made with the deputed clerk in the coast-office, under the collector outward in the port of LONDON, at the custom-house there, subject to the same fees, and for the same purposes.

And the trustees were empowered by the said act of 29th GEORGE II. cap. 39. to mortgage the ground allotted for holding the market, or any buildings or erections thereon, for securing any further sums of money they might be obliged to borrow, and to enable them to pay their debts already accrued, as well as to carry the trusts reposed in them, if possible, into a more compleat execution.

The trustees finding, that notwithstanding their best endeavors, and notwithstanding the repeated assistance which the
several

several acts of parliament before-mentioned had given them ; yet, whether from combinations of persons interested in the trade, or from some other secret and incurable causes, the fishermen still persisted in neglecting or refusing to attend the market ; and finding that from the opening of the market to that time, the whole toll duties and profits amounted to no more than 10*l*. 12*s*. 7*d*. and being greatly involved in debt, by erecting such stalls and wharfs as were necessary for the accommodation of the salesmen, they were finally obliged to abandon the design, and to borrow monies on a building lease of the market ground, agreeably to their powers under the acts of parliament, as the means of discharging the debt they had so incurred ; this lease was granted to RICHARD HUGHES, for the term of 72 years, commencing from LADY-DAY, 1753, at a pepper-corn rent yearly, for the first two years, and at the clear annual rent of £65. for the remaining 70 years, who hath since built several houses thereon.

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By granting this lease, and by the receipt of the duties arising to them from the entries of the fishing vessels into the river THAMES, they were enabled to borrow the sum of £600. on a mortgage of the market ground, with which money they discharged the greater part of their debts, and at length by means of the reserved rent, and by the profits arising from the entries, the trustees in the year 1774, actually paid off the principal money and interest, due on the mortgages of the first loan of £400. and the £600. just mentioned, and became totally relieved from incumbrances they had been thus unfortunately obliged to incur ; since which time, the trustees have invested their accruing profits arising from the reserved rent, and the duties, in the consolidated £3. per cent. bank annuities, the whole of which, at CHRISTMAS, 1786, amounted to the sum of £3,200. now standing in the names of JAMES SAYER, esquire, the treasurer, THOMAS PARKER, and GEORGE STUBBS, esquires, two of the trustees.

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The trustees being in the clear receipt at this time of the dividends of the £3,200. annuities, of the reserved ground-rent of £65. per annum, and of the three-fourths of the duties arising from the entries of fishing vessels, which upon an average amounts to £140. a year, and their outgoings amounting to only £25. a year, as a salary for the inspector at GRAVESEND, and £20. a year to their clerk, with about £15. a year more for the use of a room at their meetings, and otherwise, (the trustees having at all their meetings borne their own expences,) and this income accumulating yearly, without any fixed object, and without any possible benefit to the public : the trustees have been put under great difficulty to discover what method they ought in propriety to pursue, so as to second the intention of the legislature, in the attainment of that object for which these funds were originally created.

Various ideas upon the subject have at different times been suggested, and thrown

but for the consideration of the trustees ; but it can scarcely escape our observation, that the acts of parliament creating the undertaking and raising the funds by which it was to be supported, are totally silent, as to the disposition of any sums of money that might eventually remain, after the certainly possible contingency of the designs failing ; if indeed during the existence of the market, the neat profits had exceeded the expences, in that case, it was directed, that the surplus should be laid out in binding poor boys apprentices to fishermen. As however, the main design intended by the acts of parliament, has failed, and as the disposition of the surplus was directed only to operate upon a contingency, and that peculiarly for the benefit and encouragement of the market itself, it is apprehended, that the trustees would not now be justified, in applying the sums of money in their hands to this secondary and eventual object, especially to an object which seems unworthy of resources so very considerable as these are now become, which calls for no assistance, and promises little advantage ;

advantage ; and which perhaps it is sufficient to say, is clearly out of the true legal powers at present possessed by the trustees.

Their duty seems more clearly to point out to them, that this is the proper time when their funds have arrived at a certain degree of consequence, for submitting a state of their conduct and proceedings to the consideration of parliament, with an account of the failure of the market, and of the sums of money remaining in their hands after its dissolution. If it be their duty to do so, it will be a duty highly gratifying and honourable in the discharge of it. Their account books, and no account books have been more regularly kept, will fully prove that not a shilling has been wasted in unnecessary expence, or in visionary and extravagant plans, where perhaps there was the greatest inducement to do both, at least where there was no external restraint or obstruction to prevent them, and in the future destination of these sums of money,

parliament will no doubt avail itself of the experience and reflections of the trustees, in applying them again in a more successful manner to the same purposes for which they were originally intended.

They therefore submit to the consideration of the legislature, that their wish and purpose is, in the present proposal, to remedy an evil, which all persons acknowledge to exist, by the employment of means, which, if they should ultimately produce no good, in the mean time create no new expence, and cannot be liable to the imputation of introducing any mischievous consequence.

Although it is certainly unnecessary for this purpose to enquire by what means, or to what degree, the evils generally complained of in the management of the LONDON fishery, and particularly of the fishery in the river THAMES, have arisen, yet before a new plan is suggested for attempting to regulate and correct them, it
will

will perhaps be required to take a short review of such steps as have formerly been pursued for this purpose, and having failed, are now forgotten, as well as to state those powers and regulations, which, although in full existence at present, are attended with no salutary, or at least effectual consequences.

The first step of any consequence that we meet with in modern times, was taken by king CHARLES I. who incorporated by name thirty-one persons, inhabitants of the city of LONDON, and counties of MIDDLESEX, SURREY, ESSEX, and KENT; with the rest of the inhabitants of those counties and city, using the craft of fishing, into a company called the fishermen's company. This charter armed them with very strong powers; they were enabled (besides being possessed of the usual faculties incident to corporations) with the assistance of the LONDON water bailiff, and the consent of the lord high admiral, to make bye-laws for the regulation of all fishermen, and the

the preservation of the spawn and fry of fish, between STAINES bridge and the NORE, with certain penalties in case of disobedience, to be prosecuted and levied in the admiralty court, for the benefit of the company.

This charter the company surrendered into the hands of king JAMES II. who returned it to them soon after with additional privileges. The consent of the lord mayor and aldermen of the city of LONDON was here first required, before the bye-laws should become valid. This charter was confirmed, and enlarged by an act of the ninth of queen ANNE, in which act, some few alterations were made in the mode of electing the court of assistants, and summary convictions were ordered to be taken before justices of the peace, instead of forcing the company to follow the old and circuitous mode of recovering the penalties in the admiralty court. Then follow several clauses for the better regulation of the fishermen, such as that every fisherman's

man's boat should have the name of the owner fixed to it, with many other minute orders which would better have composed the subject of a bye-law of the court of assistants, than the resolutions of the nation assembled in parliament; and it may not be thought impertinent to observe, that almost all parliamentary establishments have failed; at least have been confounded by blending the creation with the execution of their plans, at once providing a competent authority, and taking away its duty. And commonly by that general and conjectural knowledge, which, must of necessity be the only ground-work of statutes of institution; giving so strong a bias to its conduct, that all the experience and good management of the persons intrusted by parliament, may never be able to restore it to its proper direction.

The charter, together with the act of parliament of queen ANNE, remain to this day unrepealed and uncanceled; and yet it is unnecessary to say, that the company has
long

long ceased to execute its powers, or indeed to exist. Not possessed of pecuniary resources, they found it impossible to satisfy the most ordinary expences. Being a modern company, they had no estates left to them by the parsimonious gratitude of some fortunate predecessor; and meeting with insupportable obstructions in establishing their convictions, they received neither penalties nor forfeitures; of course, a company so circumstanced, could not long support its jurisdiction.

Parliament finding that the evils of the fishery were rapidly increasing, and that the privileges of the fishermen's company had been abandoned by their possessors, passed an act in the 30th year of GEO. II. intituled, "an act for the more effectual preservation and improvement of the spawn and fry of fish in the river THAMES, and the waters of MEDWAY, and for the better regulating of the fishery thereof."

The preamble of the act recites, the act of the 9th of queen ANNE, whereby additional

ditional privileges were given to the company of fishermen of the said river, in making bye-laws and ordinances, with other powers for the regulation of the company, and for reforming abuses committed in the said fishery; and that in pursuance of the said act, certain bye-laws had been made for reforming the said abuses. But that the said company having ceased to act from about the year 1727, and most of the members thereof being dead, due regulation in the fishery had not taken place, and the several laws then in force, for that purpose, had proved ineffectual; and that by the unwarrantable practices used by fishermen and others, the spawn and fry of fish had been greatly hurt and destroyed. And therefore for the preventing the fishing in the said river and waters, with unlawful and ill-sized nets; and for ascertaining the times, seasons, and manner of fishing therein; and the size and kind of nets or engines to be used in fishing there; and for regulating the fishery, and reforming the abuses therein, power is given by the said act

to the court of aldermen of the city of LONDON, to make rules and ordinances for regulating the fishery in the river THAMES and the waters of MEDWAY, within the jurisdiction of the mayor, as conservator of the said river and waters ; and to annex penalties for the breach of such rules and ordinances. The same being first approved of by the lord chancellor, the lords chief justices, and lord chief baron.

The mayor and court of aldermen were yearly to summon twelve fishermen, and to examine them respecting the state and condition of the fishery. The water-bailiff and his assistants, authorized by the lord mayor, are empowered to enter into fishermen's boats and seize all prohibited nets, fish, &c. and to carry the fishermen before the lord mayor, or any one of the aldermen, if the offence be committed within the liberties of the city of LONDON, or before one of the justices of the peace for that county, in which the seizure was made.

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In pursuance of this act, certain rules and ordinances were made by the lord mayor and court of aldermen, to take place from the 29th of SEPTEMBER, 1757, for regulating the fishery; rules of the like import have been repeated and re-enacted in the year 1785, with very little addition or variation in substance for the same purpose.

Notwithstanding all this care in the legislature, and exertion in the court of aldermen, the same evils still exist in the same extent, and the bad state of the fishery continues to be a matter of general and well-founded complaint. There is little doubt, that if the rules and orders thus made by the lord mayor and aldermen, in pursuance of the last act, had been as faithfully executed, as they were wisely framed (and better perhaps can scarcely be devised) there would have been no occasion now for complaint upon this subject; but it is so clear and indisputable that these regulations have been disobeyed or evaded, that the city of LONDON itself has been the first to

assert it, by repeating and re-enacting the same ordinances in effect, which had previously existed for about 30 years, and which were at that very time in full force and in general neglect. And when we consider that the water-bailiff and his assistants, the persons intrusted with the execution of them are totally unacquainted with the craft and frauds of fishermen, are incapable of constant attention, and when attending are singled out by all as the source of common danger, and as objects of common resistance, and are besides totally uninterested for themselves or their employers, in the discovery of offences, but are more constantly and beneficially employed in a duty of higher importance to the public, namely, the navigation of the river, can it be wondered at, that these rules and ordinances have never been fully and fairly executed. Two facts seem to be certain, that the fishery of the river is still liable to considerable mischief, and that no benefit of consequence has resulted from a jurisdiction which has now subsisted upwards of 30 years.

Of the two jurisdictions established at different times for the regulation of the fishery, the fishermen's company seem to have been well constructed for keeping the bye-laws in perpetual and vigilant execution, had they been possessed of common motives for attending to a duty so foreign to their other pursuits. The court of aldermen on the contrary, are industrious in establishing rules, but have no body of servants to see them complied with. It is the object of the present plan to unite both, and by reviving the fishermen's company, to give to the regulations now existing, a stability and vigor which they have not hitherto experienced.

For this purpose it is proposed, that the king should by his royal letters patent, incorporate by name 31 persons, inhabitants of the cities of LONDON and WESTMINSTER, and of the counties of MIDDLESEX, SURREY, ESSEX, and KENT, with the rest of the inhabitants of those cities and counties, using the craft of fishing, into a company called the fishermen's company, (the old
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company having expired as we have already seen in the year 1727.)

The said 31 persons to be called the court of assistants, out of whom should be elected annually, as herein after mentioned, two wardens, and a master of the company.

That vacancies in the court of assistants occasioned either by death, misbehavior, or resignation, should be filled up by such persons out of the fishermen, as should seem most fit to the lord mayor, the custodes rotulorum of the counties of MIDDLESEX, SURREY, ESSEX, and KENT, and the high steward of the city and liberty of WESTMINSTER, with the members for those counties, and the cities of LONDON and WESTMINSTER, and the court of aldermen, or the majority of those different persons.

That the above named persons should be ex officio commissioners, or governors, or directors for superintending the conduct of the

the company, and should have authority to determine all differences which may arise among them, and to remove upon reasonable cause. And if the court of assistants refuse or neglect to obey any orders of the above commissioners, duly signified to them, such disobedience shall be good cause of removal or suspension of any of the members in the judgment of the commissioners.

That the commissioners shall annually appoint the master and wardens out of the court of assistants, and shall audit the company's accounts.

That the court of assistants shall have full power and authority, as the water-bailiff has now, to execute all the rules, ordinances and regulations, which are at present in force, and may appoint such inspectors, or other officers, as to them shall seem fit for that purpose; and all forfeitures and penalties, upon convictions, to be levied for the benefit and advantage of the company.

That

That the commissioners above named, calling to their assistance the master and wardens of the company, shall have full authority to make from time to time such further orders and regulations, in the same manner, and with the same powers as now may be made by the lord mayor and aldermen, under the act of the 30th of the late king.

The assent of the lord chancellor, chief justices, and chief baron, to be required as heretofore.

The court of assistants and their officers, to execute such further orders, and regulations, as well as those already existing.

The late company of fishermen having abandoned their charter, from a want of those ordinary resources, which are absolutely necessary for the support of the meanest and most limited authority, it is proposed, that the monies now in the hands of the trustees, and the income in their possession, should be transferred over to the
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company, and be applied to the maintenance of their jurisdiction.

The annual income of the trustees at CHRISTMAS last, amounted to £301. per annum, and arises as follows.

	£.	s.	d.
Dividends of £3,200. bank			
annuities — —	96	0	0
Ground rent of the market -	65	0	0
Duties on the entries of			
fishing-vessels in the			
river, com. annis --	140	0	0
	£301	0	0

The outgoings of the trustees amount to nearly £60. per annum, which ceasing at the time of the transfer, it is apprehended, that the income of £300. clear, will be amply sufficient to support a company in all those necessary expences, which are incident to its authority, and to satisfy the innocent gratifications of its rulers besides. The expences will, in all probability, consist in hiring a house for their

hall and office, in paying salaries to their clerk, inspectors, and under officers, and otherwise.

			Per annum.		
			£.	s.	d.
Hall	—	—	40	0	0
Clerk	—	—	25	0	0
Hall-keeper	—	—	20	0	0
Inspector at GRAVESEND	—	—	25	0	0
Twenty deputy inspectors from the NORE to STAINES, at £5. a year each			100	0	0
Annual audit dinner	—	—	20	0	0
Coals, candles, paper, pens, and other necessaries	—	—	70	0	0
			<u>£300</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>

It will not escape our recollection, that this income is at this moment accumulating into principal, that the time must come when the leases will expire, and the full rents accrue to the company; and that under a more vigilant inspection, the entries may very probably be considerably increased, without mentioning the penalties and forfeitures. All which might fairly be

be stated as inducing a belief, that the income of the company will very shortly exceed the sum of £300. before-mentioned; but as that sum appears to be amply sufficient for every necessary purpose, these probabilities of increasing profit, are only mentioned as additional incitements to the industry and activity of the company, upon whose exertions they seem entirely to depend, and for whose benefit they would ultimately be received. The court of assistants to have the controul and management of the revenues, and expenditure of the company, with the approbation of the commissioners at their annual audit.

Such is the outline of a plan, which being simple and unentangled in its regulations, will not require much labour or information, and a very trifling expence to finish it in all its parts. It cannot but be observed, that in the enacting of rules and ordinances for the regulation of the fishery, it is silent, being satisfied with such as are already in existence on that subject; and well knowing that a new plan should

be contented with creating capabilities of improvement only, without aiming at too much in the first instance. If the truth of this assertion can be objected to at all, it must be upon that part of the plan which appoints commissioners for the purpose, among others, of adding to the present ordinances as occasion may require. To this objection it may be answered, that the authority is exactly the same as that which now exists, and resides in the court of aldermen; nor can it be said, that any material or dangerous alteration is created by the intention of intrusting it to a greater number of persons.

The court of aldermen might perhaps be the only persons intitled to object to this association of authority with them, if they were not too well informed, not to know that the authority itself has been given them by act of parliament in very late times; that the gift of money is a very reasonable ground for requiring an extension of authority; but above all, that the well being, the security, and the end itself
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of that authority, depends upon its popular and favourable reception in those counties; the respectable magistrates and representatives of which are intended to share with them, in the establishment and success of this new jurisdiction.

The only material alteration then which this plan is calculated to produce, consists in the change of persons who are to put the regulations in execution, and in the restoration of the fishermen's company for that purpose.

It is much too trite to speak of the advantages which must always result from placing a confidence in a firm collected body of well chosen men, for the execution of a duty, which at once gratifies their wishes, and is closely interwoven with their interest. The court of assistants are the efficient persons intrusted with the execution of those rules, and are removed from the temptations of neglect, which might influence a larger body of men. For although the rest of the fishermen be
included

included in the number of the company, and as such, subject to their jurisdiction; and are the persons from whom the vacancies in the court of assistants must always be supplied; yet in the article of government, and in the possibility of inducing mismanagement, they can have no share.

The vacancies are to be filled up by the discretion of persons incapable of being deceived or corrupted, and when once the court of assistants is well-chosen, they will consist of men grown old in business, conversant in the arts they are to detect, sure of reaping the profit of detection, and proud of an authority they are secured firm themselves; nor is there any danger that such authority will be abused, or abused to any extent with impunity, while the superintendence of the commissioners is hanging over every particular of their conduct, and is capable of rectifying the offence, and of dismissing the offenders.

It is scarcely worth mentioning, that by means of an authority of this kind, the
water-

watermen's company, consisting of the most numerous and the most indolent body of people in LONDON, are kept in such good order, that very few evils are known to take place among them, and are redressed as soon as known.

The consequence of the success which may attend a plan of this kind, will be, that the regulations hitherto unobserved, will be more punctually obeyed, and the fishery of the river THAMES be made, by such means, a more copious source of supply than it has formerly been found. In which case the price of sea-fish will fall in proportion, nor is it an extravagant supposition to conjecture, that the river fishery may be improved to such an extent, as to be attended with a consequence so important and beneficial to the public; when we consider the many evils it is exposed to, among which it will be necessary to mention only two, to prove the probability of the assertion, namely, that many thousands of the fry of fish are destroyed in certain periods of the year, for the sole purpose of furnishing
the

the jeweller's shops with beads; and secondly, that many thousands more of the small fish become entangled in the unlawful meshes of the nets thrown in for taking larger fish, and when the nets are hauled in to shore, the fish are thrown out as weeds, and left to rot upon the banks. It is impossible to single out instances where the abuse is pretty nearly universal, and where it is not, it is merely the fisherman's sense of his own interest, that keeps him to better practice.

To lay the first stone of such an institution as this, is important, if it only affords an opportunity to persons of happier observation, and greater experience hereafter to build upon. In that point of view, the attempt to insure it a trial is desirable, and if in consequence something of greater advantage upon the same subject be hereafter completed, or better effects be found to follow from this than we can venture either to promise or expect; if for instance it should lead to some general regulation of our commercial fisheries, and put us in compleat
possession

possession of those marine rights which nature seems to have appropriated to this island; in that case we should be relieved from something like a national disgrace, that LONDON, the metropolis of the kingdom, open to the sea, incirled by the richest of rivers, and crowded with ships, that in such a city, fish, that great article of food to all the world beside, should be considered as a luxury, and an exotic; some disgrace too would be removed from the country at large, that when every other production of nature is raised, cherished, and almost created by the fostering industry of mankind, this great and desirable support of life should not only not be encouraged by our labour, but that to our arts alone it must be imputed, that the spontaneous effusions of nature are checked, and its unassisted, inexhaustible and universal treasures curtailed of their just and proper operation.

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